

Care for the Fold.

BY J. W. BEER.

A Shepherd has gone from the fold away,
In search of the sheep that are now astray;
But while he is striving to bring them home,
The dearest of all from the fold may roam.
Great Shepherd, provide for the young and old,
That none of them stray from thy precious fold.

The shepherd is seeking the sheep now lost,
Because they were purchased at wondrous cost;
But while he is toiling to lead them home,
To mountains of sin a dear lamb may roam.
Great Shepherd, protect them—the young and old,
That none shall be lost from thy gracious fold.

Should any be lost while the shepherd is gone,
And wander far off in the hills so lone,
How sad would the heart of the shepherd be,
If he should be brought, when too late, to see,
That while he was gathering young and old,
The dearest of all left the blissful fold.

Great Shepherd, look down from thy home on high,
And richly the wants of thy flock supply,
That while thy poor servant is far from home,
Not one of the flock from the fold may roam.
Protect them and feed them—the young, the old,
And keep them forever within thy fold.

If one of the dear ones has gone astray—
Is strolling in forests of sin today,
Good Shepherd, behold with thy gracious eye,
And all that is needful in love supply,
That quickly the wayward, by grace controlled,
May gladly return to thy lovely fold.
Lanark, Ill., Jan. 17, 1887.

For What Do Christians Go to Church?

A difficult question to answer simple as it seems. It would be answered very differently by different persons. Taking all the answers our experiences and observation would anticipate and drawing a mean average, we would classify professing church goers under the heads, those who go to give and those who go to receive. Some go, out of a glad and grateful heart, to show and to express their gratitude to God, and to bear a part in his public worship. Indeed it is true that while this class go to give God thanks and adoration, they also receive the blessing which accompanies such worship.

Others go in order to gain some personal advantage through what they see and hear and feel while there. The first mentioned class are pretty sure to accomplish what they go for. They swell the service of prayer and praise, and by their looks and evident appreciativeness they cheer the heart of the preacher, and give added force to his preaching. The latter class however often find their church going a failure. The singing is found fault with; the prayers are formal and long to their taste and fail to come up to their expectations; the scripture lesson is poorly selected and the tone and spirit of the reading is complained of; and as to the sermon, they think it was not worth hearing, it was so dry and sapless, they say they believe they could do as well themselves.

It is a great pity that the latter class are so numerous. These are the people whose seats are found so often vacant on the most trivial excuses. It is too hot or too cold, or they are not feeling quite well. In fact it takes but little to keep them at home. But the same parties, when they are too sick or tired, or it is too hot or too cold or too wet for church going, are not too sick or tired to go out visiting and spending the Sabbath enjoying themselves amongst their friends. Sunday visiting is not to be lamented, and cried down, for it is good for us to visit; but the trouble is, it is so often abused by allowing it to seriously interfere with our Christian duties.

An instance of these two classes now recurs to us, and strange to say it is found in the same person. A complete change of feeling is the reason for the change of conduct. In one of the counties adjoining Ashland, there lives a good, worthy, earnest brother and sister. But they were not always so earnest in their Christian duties. Several years ago, while visiting at their house, which was about a mile and a half from church, the wife one Sunday evening asked the husband if he wasn't going to church. He goes out on the porch, and although the stars twinkled down on him from a cloudless sky, he thought he could see some threatening clouds in the far west, and so excused himself that he was afraid it was going to rain.

He did not go. Some time after that, we were again at the same house. It was Sunday evening. The rain was pouring down very steadily. The good little wife asked the same question I had heard her ask some time before, whether he was going to church. He goes out on the porch, looks all around, and although not a break was to be seen in the clouds above, he very earnestly said, "Oh yes, I believe it is going to slack up soon and quit raining. They went to church in the rain and came home in the rain. So you see it is just according to the spectacles we wear, how the weather looks to us."

The poorest specimens of church goers are those who are constantly complaining about the preacher, his sermons, and the services generally. Hearers of that sort are like Pharaoh's lean kine; the more they swallow the leaner they look. In this sphere, as well as in every other, the words of our Lord are true, "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

Exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

A simple sentence explains this scripture. God will abundantly satisfy the holy desires of the faithful.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

This is one of the many passages in the New Testament which establishes the truth that the reward in eternity shall be in the same kind that the subject dealt out in this life. The merciful shall obtain mercy. God is the source of all good, and without him there is no desirable quality of mind, disposition or possession; so man is the originator of nothing. He always acts as an agent in his relation to God, if he serves God; and to satan, when he does evil and is the servant of satan. God's abundance never grows less, and if all the inhabitants of the earth were dispensers of God's mercy the source would not fail; and he who is thus engaged will, at the appointed time, become a possessor of a portion of that which he has dispensed to others—the merciful shall obtain mercy.

There are many opportunities in life to do acts of mercy, within the church and without. Compassion upon the poor and the distressed, upon those who are oppressed by priestly tyrants; upon the victims of luxury, of false friends, intemperance and vile associations. The earth is walking full of wreck to whom a friendly manifestation of mercy will appear as a saving arm in the hour of apparent destruction.

One beauty of mercy is that it takes no pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Instead of finding that which is amusing, it extends the soothing hand of sympathy, and is ready to act in removing them from distress. This is what God has done for us. By his mercy he hath saved us by the bath of rebirth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The follower of Christ, then, will be an imitator, in a measure, of the Father, and will show mercy to his fellowmen.

What is Congregational?

In Vol. 8th, No. 46, we notice a criticism upon our article contained in No. 43, same vol., in regard to our views relative to Christ partaking of the legal Passover. We should have answered the criticism ere this had not our editor proclaimed an armistice, claiming that articles of a controversial nature was distasteful to a portion of our brotherhood. We fail to see why this should be the case, since the publication of our platform to the world: "The Bible the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible." It is obvious that there are many points in our platform upon which we are not a unit; and how, let me ask in all candor, can we ever be if we indulge in this system of covering up in silence questions that are so vital as that of a supported or salaried ministry, secret communion, as well as open or close communion etc.? It has not been long since articles appeared in opposition to doctrinal preaching and was allowed to be discussed through the paper until it was thread-bare, and its advocates left the field perfectly non-plussed. Some try to brush aside those unsettled requisites by proclaiming that we are congregational. I hope we are; but never to the extent contained in these dec-

larations. We perhaps are among the oldest now living of the ancient Congregational Brethren. And let me hear say that we never understood that to be "congregational a local organization would have a right to tamper with the ordinances of the gospel." Were we congregational only in baptism, Lord's supper, foot-washing, communion, anointing the sick etc. We could not be congregational, were we to allow a local congregation to regulate its practice in those ordinances. We would perhaps ere long have a perfect babel. There would be no unanimity of practice amongst us.

No one would have a right to demur if a majority could adopt single backward immersion, another single forward baptism, another could set aside foot-washing, another could adopt the double mode and others retain the single. Some dispose of the kiss as a greeting, others set aside the supper.

While we are congregational and hallow that endearing name; yea, it is as dear to us as the apple of our eye. We never could consent to affiliate with a church that would claim the authority to tamper with any of the ordinances of the Lord's house. Just how far a church can go in regulating her practice in the ordinances and at the same perpetuate Christian unity with sister churches practicing differently, is a problem yet unsolved. That we must move along in perfect silence, is to my mind one of the mysteries the coming Brethren minister will have to meet. For reason we need, yes seriously need, a general convention sometime during the coming summer. Not to formulate a creed, but to systematize evangelistic work to confer in regard to the support of the ministry and to understand as much as possible, what is properly congregational ruling in all its bearings.

As an arrangement is now made in the publication of the *Investigator*, we will forbear saying any thing further at the present, and will reserve our reply to Bro. Wilt for a future article.

A. P. GIBSON.

A Word to Brother Gibson.

Your remarks contain our sentiments; but you certainly would be able to see the impropriety of filling a Sabbath School paper full of arguments in support of the doctrine of Necessarianism, Transubstantiation, or Homocousonism. It could not benefit the children, and would only serve to disgust them. There could be no reasonable objection to proper discussion in the *EVANGELIST*, could it be kept within bounds; but to give any kind of satisfaction the whole paper would be demanded; and we would be obliged to insert matter that would be mortifying to any intelligent people; much less Christians. You will probably say, "don't put in such matter;" and that would mean impudent insults to about one third who are usually eager to write upon such subjects; and every one, of course, believes what he wrote is about right.

The masses are willing to follow leaders wherever they lead; so when leaders differ, they ought to have sense enough to discuss their difference among themselves and agree, or surrender their leadership. You may object to this statement—but leaders are frauds who are not willing to enter into fair and honorable investigation to ascertain the truth, let their former opinions be what they were. Therefore should I differ from you upon any question that is vital which concerns a people which we serve in common, I would propose to you to investigate the point of difference between ourselves, and if we agreed, then we could say to the people we serve that we believe this and nothing more. If we would not agree, then it would be our duty to exercise forbearance toward one another, or mutually separate and then mutually state our difference to the people we served in common, and give our complete arguments to them fairly and frankly, and let them decide which they will follow, you or me. These remarks apply where no rule of adjustment exists.

So far as my individual relation to other members of the Brethren church are involved, if any one does any thing that concerns me and my work, that I regard incompatible with the bond of fellowship I supposed existed between us, I will tell him frankly, and invite him to honorable investigation. If we fail to agree, and cannot consent to forbear, then I will go my way and tell him to go his.

Voting to decide a question of Scripture is miserable blasphemy.

A. L. GARBER.